

Like a silhouette against the sky.

Oscar As He Is.

The pen pictures which have been drawn of Oscar Wilde universally by American newspapers are like the reflections of the convex mirror, faithful and yet distorted. No one seeing the true Oscar Wilde could fail to recognize him from them, and no one of any perception could fail to recognize just as clearly that the man is not what has been described. The pictures have at once been true and untrue, with the untruth predominating. A Republican reporter who called on him at the Southern yesterday afternoon and was shown up to his room was forcibly impressed with this.

Mr. Wilde met him at the door with a pleasant "good afternoon" and an invitation to be seated, speaking with the broad English accent which still obtains in portions of America, especially in Virginia, an accent which is rhythmic always, and which appeared to be perfectly natural with him. His appearance was much as it has been described so repeatedly in the different newspapers of the country, barring the exaggerations. His dress, which would have seemed *outré* enough on the street, did not seem out of place as a chamber *négligé*. He wore a short drab jacket, hark back and showing a waistcoat of the same material, loose pantaloons, and a collar turned negligently over a neckcloth tied in.

THE LOOSE SAILOR FASHION.

And there was something suggestive of the sea in his whole "make-up." The writer, who went altogether undecided as to the light in which the apostle was to be considered, found, after only a few words had been spoken, that there was a serious side to him which was altogether undeveloped for newspaper purposes, and which could be utilized to advantage. Perhaps no one has seen him who has not been disappointed in some way. The disappointment here was that he was not the grotesque being that has been described, but a thoroughly well-bred and well-educated young gentleman, with a large share of good humor; disposed apparently to carry out the maxim from his own beloved Greek of "especially thinking well of himself above all things," apparently too with much theoretical and little practical knowledge of men. This was the impression, but in his conversation there were keen flashes of wit which made it doubtful after all if he were not more the man of the world than he seemed.

Taking a seat and motioning the reporter to another, he lit a cigarette and said that was to be questioned, while his servant, who evidently from frequent experience knew that his master required something to sustain him through the ordeal, placed a small glass of what appeared to be

SHERRY PUNCH, VERY WEAK.

On the table before him. Leaning his head against the easy chair, with his long hair flowing over his shoulders, Oscar waited with an air which was at once resigned and quizzical, not without a suggestion of embarrassment.

"Shall I put the question which was put to your countryman, Mr. Chuzzlewit, and ask you 'What do you think of our country, sir?'" asked the reporter.

"You may if you like," was the reply, "though I might find some difficulty in answering it. It has changed greatly since Dickens' day, no doubt. Every city in America is different from every other city—quite different. The West interests me more than the East, because the people of the West have created a civilization by themselves and for themselves. The East is a reflex of Europe, and therefore Chicago was more interesting to me than Boston, even though there I met Oliver Wendell Holmes, with whom I dined, and Longfellow, with whom I spent the afternoon. Eastern cities are imitations; Chicago is entirely American."

"I have read an account of your meeting with Joaquin Miller," said the reporter.

"That was true—one of the few true things that have been written about me. Yes, Joaquin is a very fine fellow, full of color; one of the first American poets, who is really from and of the New World. There is in his writings a resonance and an odor of not seen flowers; a breath of the sea; he is

QUITE SWIFT AND STRONG

As the sea, full of new imagery."

"And Whitman?"

"By the way, what do you think of Whitman, yourself?" was the query which met the thrust.

"There are lines in his 'Blades of Grass' which, insane as he is generally counted, remind me of Homer. But my opinion is valueless, and my question unanswered."

He smiled as he took a fresh cigarette from a little box on the table and lighted it with the air of one who was lighting his words before answering. When he did answer he said:

"Whitman is a great writer. You are right, as it seems to me. There is more of the Greek feeling in him than in any modern poet. His poetry is Homeric in its large pure delight in men and women, and in the joy the writer feels and shows through it all in the sunshine and breeze of outdoor life."

"And since we speak of living poets, what of your own Swinburne?"

"We look on Swinburne as one of the great poets of the day in England. In America, you seem to judge him entirely by his first volume, his 'Laus Venenis,' which had in it many of the extravagances, too, natural and proper enough, too, in the first attempt of genius. You judge him solely by this and no by his later writings, such as the 'Songs of Democracy' and 'The Songs Before Sunrise.' Swinburne, Shelley and Milton are the three great poets of liberty in England, and Swinburne is the greatest master of the English language living."

WONDERFUL IN HIS POWER

Of expression and his control of words. Language to him is what the beautiful musical instrument is to the musician—the violin from which he draws what tunes he wishes. No one of our times has written poems more full of the fervor for liberty and the strength of democracy, and no one singer has sung such delicate and dainty little songs. Where else can you find the refinement of feeling that there is in his poem?

"If you were that the rose is And I were like the leaf?"

Where such poems as his 'Garden of Proserpine' and his 'Hymn to Proserpine'?"

"You have been accused of imitating him,"

will doubtless be observed that in the interview, which is near verbatim as it is possible for an interview to be given, the use of "aesthetic" terms which characterized the first part of it gradually disappeared as the speaker grew earnest, as when referring to Swinburne. The writer was forcibly impressed with it, and when he did leave the room he left it with a feeling that there was something under the sunflower and lily metaphysics as under the practical system of metaphysics as under the practical system of sense. And perhaps the young gentleman with the Sapphic speech and the mane of Absalom will not be so much ashamed of it when he has grown older and abandoned the lecture platform.

The Lecture.

The crowd commenced to gather at Mercantile Library hall long before the lecture hour, eight o'clock, and at that time the hall, which seats 1,800 people, was full, the audience being drawn from every class, the majority of those present, however, being people of culture, who came from curiosity, prepared to weigh critically and pass judgment on what they were to hear. There were a few who made themselves conspicuous—notably one young man who walked down the central aisle with an immense calla lily planted on the front of a "red" coat and three ladies—a middle-aged woman with red hair, a little girl of 14 and a girl somewhat older—who sat to the right of the platform with artificial sunflowers, a centre for all the eyes in the house before the lecturer himself appeared. During the afternoon there had been talk of a plan to stop the lecture by interrupting the speaker, but it had not been carried out, and no such attempt would be made, and no provisions had been made to

GUARD AGAINST AN EMERGENCY.

As the lecturer came on the platform he was greeted with applause, which had scarcely subsided before he commenced speaking, delivering, to all intents and purposes, the same address as in Chicago and Cincinnati. He wore an ordinary evening dress, black "swallow-tail" coat and vest, knee-breeches, silk stockings and low shoes, with large buckles and ties. His collar was turned down loosely over a white cravat tied in a bow-knot. He lacked on the stage something of the ease and grace which he has away from it, and at first showed some constraint, which wore away as he had spoken for some time. Perhaps no speaker ever mounted the platform who was less *en rapport* with his audience, and this was evident from the first. With small exceptions it was a well-bred audience which gave him well-bred attention, listening closely to all but assimilating little. This was due in a measure no doubt to the dress which he had chosen to assume, but much more to his language, which was flowery to a degree as widely defective as the most grotesque design of the Moresque school. He endeavored to present himself as an incarnate exaggeration in appearance and speech, but this was no excuse for the behavior of half a dozen young roughs at the back of the hall who interrupted him incessantly to whisper the close of his lecture by stamping, as much to his disgust as to that of the audience. The trouble commenced when he made a reference to

THE BEAUTIFUL STREETS.

It was a palpable hit, and was answered by long continued applause and laughter, continuing so long that he was obliged to have had not to the best of his knowledge said anything funny he was somewhat offended at it. This was noticed by a majority of the audience which did not attempt to restrain its laughter, and the speaker, at the back, commenced stamping, promptly showed his disapprobation by hissing them. The offence against good taste and good breeding was confined to half a dozen persons who should have been promptly ejected. Although silently annoyed and annoyed, as was Mr. Wilde kept on to the end. As for the lecture itself, it contained ideas—some of them entirely his own ideas, too—which would have been at once recognized as sensible and meritorious had they been presented in less flowery language. Robbed of some little of its verbiage the lecture follows:

"In every great country and in every great city," he said, in commencing, "there is produced every year a certain amount of artistic power and intelligence. Use it as a mockery if you will, or trev it on the sands of the desert, but you can never use it for any purpose but art. In the lecture which I am about to have the honor to deliver before you it is my purpose to tell you what we in England are doing and to show you that whatever you have heard of

THIS AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

That it has a very practical object. There is great talk of the useful as opposed to the beautiful, but utility is always on the side of the beautiful. And more, you can not get good work from your handicraftsmen unless you give them good designs. If your designs are poor and worthless, poor and worthless will be your work. If you give to your workmen good designs they will work with heart as well as head, which is very different from working with the head alone.

There was in the last century an aesthetic movement in Germany, which consisted chiefly of a collection of very nasty and dusty philosophers, who were quite content to spend their lives in the dreary surroundings provided that they could write what they called the philosophy of beauty, and by that I mean some intellectual definition, some universal formula for beauty, which might include everything and probably mean nothing. But we in England are quite content to leave for our old age an intellectual definition of beauty—if people who love art ever have an old age at all. But what we want to do is to produce by the means of beautiful surroundings that artistic temperament which is the basis of all creation of art; there is not even an understanding of art, not even an understanding of life—for as the life of a nation is, so will its art be; if the motive has something noble and beautiful in it, noble and beautiful will its art be; but if its life is shameful, then it will have an art that is grotesque. We wish to bring back to England the noble race of splendid handicraftsmen which existed there hundreds of years ago. When people discover a new material, then it is that the dead ashes of art take upon themselves new

the wrong material. One doesn't want to eat one's canvas and duck off of 'moonlight,' or his terrapin off of 'sunsets.'

Don't imitate; don't copy, but work with your own imagination. In colors the most beautiful are those which seem about to pass into one another. Color without tone is like music without harmony."

The true designer does not draw a design and then color it, for as he thinks the design he thinks the color also.

Let your young ladies paint their sunsets and moonlight if they like, but not on soup plates. They do it because they have never been taught that the same design will not do for a cover which is to be placed flat on a table and a curtain which is to hang in folds. Don't mind other schools of art—make your own. The conditions of art are much simpler than are supposed."

Here the lecturer broke

THE THREAD OF HIS DISCOURSE. If it could be said that it had a thread, and recalling what he had said to a REPUBLICAN reporter in an interview, continued:

"Make it a law that no newspaper shall be allowed to write about art at all. The harm that they do is not to be over estimated—not to the artist, but to the public. To disagree on all points with the modern newspaper is one of the chief indications of sanity."

But let us return to art. All great schools of art have been under the republics. If we wish to see what monarchy can do for art, let us look at the monstrous and unreal art of France under the great monarchy with its grotesque shapes and unreal designs of furniture squinted at if very properly ashamed of itself. You have around you here all the conditions for art. The Art museum here is one of the most beautiful in America. There is yet not much in it, but there is nothing there is not good. If the modern sculptor should come to me and ask me where to find his models, I should tell him to go to the docks of the large cities and watch there the men loading and unloading at

THE WHEEL AND WINDLASS.

For among the most ungainly there will be some movement where grace can be seen in their movements as they work—it is only the loafer and idler who can not interest him and are useless; in the city where he may see the water carriers and the farmer's wife drawing water at the well. If the man can not find in them the subjects he seeks he never will find them at all. Don't imitate the works of any nation except for the purpose of practising. The gods and the goddesses of the Greeks were carved because the Greek believed in them and loved them. You don't care for gods and you are right; you don't care for kings and perhaps you are just as right there. What you care for is your own men and women, and I think you are right. Don't imitate the Greek, the Japanese, the English or the Italian, for you can make as beautiful a design out of an American trolley as you the Japanese can out of his silvery wheelwork. The golden rod and the aster are the flowers for you. You have in the material—more inexhaustible stores of marble than there was ever hidden away in Ponteleus or Paros, but don't build into your square houses and think them beautiful. If you want to decorate or decorate or play it with other stone, else you had much better

BUILD OF RED BRICK.

As did your fathers. You want to see that you have nothing in your house that is not a pleasure both to you and its maker. I have spoken to you up to this time of influence of the handicraftsman on art. Will it really influence national life at all? I am sure it will. Love art for its own sake, and then all that you need will be added to you. This devotion to beauty and the creation of beautiful things is the distinction of all civilized nations. It is what makes the life of each citizen a sacrament, and not a speculation. It is what makes the life of the whole race immortal, for beauty is one thing that time cannot harm. Philo-sophies melt away like the mists; creeds dissolve; but beauty is a joy for all time, a possession for all eternity. Wars and the clashing of arms and the meeting of men in battle must be always; but I think that art, creating a common intellectual atmosphere in all the countries, might, if it could not overshadow the world with the silvery wings of peace, at least make men such brothers that they would not go out to slay one another, as they do now. Art, for the while, and caprice of some king or parliament or high empire, must be as long as personal ambition and the spirit of the age prevail; but art is the only empire that may not yield to the conquest yet at least."

The lecturer may come when he will say as did Goethe when asked why he did not write bad things of the French, who had invaded Germany: "How could I, to whom

BARBARISM AND CIVILIZATION

Are of so much importance? How could I hate a nation which is among the most civilized of the earth, to whom I owe so much of my own cultivation?"

The abiding presence of beautiful things in our houses will teach our youth to love the beautiful in the history of the nation, as did some common things as the old cruse, the Greek youth who saw depicted on it the glorious patriotism of Hector and the valorous deeds of Achilles, or as did the common things in the houses the little children of Italy in the fifteenth century all the glories and tales of Rome from the time of Laocoe. Take some simple school of decorative art and let its motives be chosen from history."

The lecturer then continued, giving his views on the art education of children, which are not different from those of his master, Ruskin, asserting that they were taught 2,000 years ago by Plato. It was a mistake, he said, to attempt to save a child's soul before you gave him one. Children could learn more from men than from books.

THE DREARY RECORDS OF BATTLES

And kings, or the dull details of latitude and longitude in geography. When they grow up, what then? Flowers of wood and drawers of water they must be at ways, but at least let the picher whom stands by the well be beautiful for them. Quoting then from Wm. Morris to show what he meant by an artist: "When I say an artist, I mean a man," he told how he came to be an artist.

"One summer afternoon in Oxford," he said, "that city, beautiful almost as Venice, walk-